

EDITOR'S MISCELLANY



PRELIMINARY TRAINING OF NURSES.—With the gradual raising of the standard in various departments of educational work it is not unnatural that renewed attention should be directed to the preliminary training of nurses. Apparently nursing has ceased to be a trade, and has become a profession with certain definite standards. The last few years have seen the organization of nurses in various parts of the country, and with this organization must come a definite feeling of the importance of the body to which they belong and of the necessity of forcing this recognition upon people at large. It has been noticeable for the past few years that both nurses themselves and physicians interested in the general problem have been suggesting a certain more definite preliminary training for women intending to take up the profession of nursing.

In the issue of the *Journal* for November 21, 1901, Dr. R. C. Cabot expressed the hope that in the course of time nursing might be made a "liberal profession." To this end he made various pertinent suggestions regarding the reform of training-schools, and came to the following general conclusions: that the instructors of nurses should be paid; that nursing should be taught by nurses; that the preparation for private nursing should be taught in private families and by private nurses, and that the curriculum should contain liberal as well as purely technical studies.

Again in our issue for June 18, 1903, Dr. Francis P. Denny discusses the need of an institution for the education of nurses which shall provide for their training independent of the hospitals before undertaking the actual work of hospital nursing. Dr. Denny believes that the nurse's diploma should come from this institution rather than from the hospital, and that its award should represent satisfactory work in the preliminary course, together with service in a hospital in which there was a high standard of nursing.

All this points clearly in the direction we have indicated, that physicians as well as nurses are demanding more completely trained women, and that the educational standard must thereby be definitely and permanently raised. The matter seems to have reached a more or less definite solution in Philadelphia, where there has recently been organized, under the auspices of the Drexel Institute, a preparatory course of instruction for nurses. This movement has been instigated by Dr. S. Weir Mitchell and the superintendents of the leading training-schools of the city. After due consideration of the question, members of the American Society of Superintendents of Training-Schools for Nurses have reached the conclusion that if a preparatory course of training in scientific branches can be given, it would afford much needed relief for nurses during the first year of their actual technical training. The course of instruction which has been mapped out in the preliminary announcement includes such subjects as anatomy, physiology, medical chemistry, domestic science and economics, English, vocal expression, hygiene, bacteriology, and, what is no doubt of equal importance, physical training in the gymnasium. Public lectures on art, science, literature, etc., which are from time to time given at the institute during the winter, are also to be open to the student. It is proposed to give a certificate to those who complete

the full course, and the leading training-schools of the city are to give preference to candidates who hold a certificate of the preparatory course.

This experiment, if we may call it by that name, is practically sure of success. Whenever standards have been raised, whether in medicine or other lines of work, there have always been students in sufficient numbers to meet the added demands made upon them. That this will also be true of nurses there cannot be the slightest question, and in general we must be in sympathy with a movement which tends to the betterment of what is becoming more and more distinctly professional work.

The consequences, however, of this elevation of standard and consequent extra time demanded will, no doubt, be felt in the increased payment which must be made to such highly trained women. This we cannot regard as an unmitigated blessing. The standard fee of three dollars a day has long been established, is in general adequate for the work demanded, and we should regret for various obvious reasons to see a definite and permanent increase in the amount demanded by the best nurses. Already certain obstetrical nurses, and no doubt others, are asking and getting twenty-five dollars a week. We have not the slightest desire to begrudge this or any other amount which may be legitimately earned, but we must distinctly face the fact that a new class of nurses will be developed, inferiorly educated, who will in consequence give their services for smaller amounts. We need nurses for all classes in the community, and particularly for that class of persons whose means are moderate, but whose requirements are the same as with persons of much greater financial resources. In the development of nursing as a profession we certainly do not wish to lose sight of nursing as a humanitarian art, nor do we wish to lose sight of what practical nursing really is. We are somewhat skeptical as to the claim of nursing to be ranked as a "liberal profession," and we shall regret the day, which seems close upon us, when women trained as nurses will find it beneath their dignity to do the hard, menial, disagreeable work which, after all, constitutes the essence of their calling. Even under existing conditions many nurses are far from being an unmitigated blessing in the household, and if further education is to increase this deplorable tendency we must forthwith call a halt. In the meantime we await with much interest the developments which are sure to come.—*Editorial Comment Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, July 2*

ARE NURSES PROFESSIONAL PERSONS?—

BOSTON, July 5, 1903.

MR. Editor: Your editorial in the current number of the *Journal* (Boston *Medical and Surgical Journal*, July 2) must interest all of us who have concerned ourselves with what one may call the nurse's problem. One aspect of the problem frequently has appeared to me to be too little regarded: I refer to the condition which you mention in describing the work of nurses as a "liberal profession"—their status after graduation.

The meaning of the words "liberal profession" must be an extremely elastic one. The Standard Dictionary defines a profession as "an occupation that properly involves a liberal education or its equivalent, and mental rather than manual labor." Truly this is a halting description, though correct enough so far as it goes.

I take it that professional persons, such as lawyers, doctors, literary men, engineers, etc., work for fees—for small fees or for large fees according to their

earning capacity. The professional person's success in life must depend upon his mental and physical achievements and capacities, and his tasks, limited in the same fashion, are a measure of his success.

In this sense can nurses be regarded as professional persons? In the very nature of things they must work for wages and not for fees, their wages are limited by well-recognized conventions, and their ambitions and progress are not stimulated by increasing opportunities and proportionate increasing returns.

Most of the advocates of the higher training of nurses have lost sight of the individual after her graduation. It would be interesting to know in what way they propose to solve the problem of nurses as practitioners and not as undergraduates.

School work is but the first step in the career of most professional persons. After graduation comes development, progress, achievement. In every true profession there must be ceaseless advance, but no goal.

Who may say that in a nurse's life work her graduation does not mark the goal of progress?

M.

—*Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.*

THE secretary of the State Board of Health of Michigan has issued a circular to physicians which contains the following:

"Tetanus is generally recognized as a dangerous communicable disease. It has been so declared by this State Board of Health. But the disease is not spread directly from person to person. It is caused by germs of one particular species, a bacillus which has been repeatedly found present in cases of sickness from this disease, also in dirt and in cartridges. The specific micro-organism which causes tetanus usually enters the body through a wound, scratch, or abraded surface of the body. Tetanus sometimes follows stepping upon a nail, especially in an old board about a barn or garden, and frequently follows an injury by a cartridge of a toy pistol, or other wound inflicted by means of gunpowder upon the hand, face, or foot. A wound upon some part of the body, within ten days prior to the development of the disease, should be carefully inquired for and the fact reported. The germs are sometimes found in garden soil and about barns, and in gunpowder made from unpurified saltpetre derived from the excrement of bats in caves. Perhaps this explains the frequency of tetanus following injuries by firecrackers and cartridges of toy pistols."

